Dick + Jean Koch
August 1990

HEADING FOR THE HILLS

by
ALICE CROWLEY JACKSON

Memories of Mineral King
for
The Centennial Celebration
1990

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To Dick and Jean Koch-

In memory of our beautiful valley and its preservation forever -

Best Wishes -

Iris Jackson

HEADING FOR THE HILLS

by

ALICE CROWLEY JACKSON

A TRIP UP THE MINERAL KING WAGON ROAD IN THE LATE 1890s

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HEADING FOR THE HILLS

The winter holidays had passed. It was January. The dark, cold days of winter with their thick blanket of Tule fog had set in and the evenings were long in this Valley of the San Joaquin.

After supper dishes were done and the evening chores completed, Mama would enter the sitting room with her arms full of mending. There was heavy clothing too badly worn for Valley use, but good enough to provide warmth for our vacation in the mountains, and Mineral King was nippy and cold even in the summer. There was long winter underwear, hard to fold smoothly under heavy black stockings. Many of these stockings needed mending. Dresses and overalls were to be patched. No one minded patches in the mountains. They were, in fact, a status symbol, insignia of a real mountaineer. Button-holes had to be repaired and endless buttons to be sewed on. Mama's one big hope was that none of us would take a growing spurt through the spring months and outgrow the mended garments before summer.

Stocking mittens were a mountain must for us girls. Taking worn-out, heavy black stockings, Mama would cut off the feet, stitch four openings for the four fingers and a large one for the thumb. On the top side of each mitten she would make three rows of feather-stitching in red floss, and on the back-side embroider our initials in red. They would be long enough to

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cover our fore-arms as well. The one thing a mother always guarded her girls against was sun-burn and a tan of any sort.

Many evenings Papa would come in, put more wood on the fire and chuck it up to a roaring blaze. That was the signal to draw our chairs close to the fire-place and get comfortably settled. He was in the mood to tell us some fascinating tale or adventure. Papa was a good story teller, unwinding fanciful make-believes, or telling us real, live tales of the past or of his youth. He would soon lapse into the typical California lingo he had learned as a boy. This was a mixture of Spanish and the varied dialects woven together during the Gold Rush days when people from every corner of the globe came to the West and were attempting to speak English. It was a colorful, ungrammatical, picturesque speech that made his tales delightful.

He took us to Eastern Oregon where he was a vaquero herding his uncle's cattle. We took part with him in the fierce Bannock Indian wars in Oregon and Nevada. We were with Natchez, son of the Paiute Chief Winnemucca, when he saved Papa's uncle and his son from being massacred by the Bannocks. We stood with him near the top of a mountain when he and his uncle were prospecting for silver in Arizona, only to learn later that the chunk of black rock his uncle picked up was almost pure silver from the great Tombstone Mine that netted its later discoverers millions of dollars.

Best of all, we enjoyed his tales about the mining days of

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Mineral King. These winter evenings were treasures, giving us a heritage unsurpassed.

Spring had come and gone. School had been closed for a month. The weather had turned hot. Old slow-poke June, the month just before we headed for the hills, was almost over. With it, the delights and freedoms of vacation in the Valley had been satisfied. Even the fun of riding to the end of the block, sitting in the back of the cool, wet ice-wagon with bare feet dangling over the end, chomping on pieces of broken ice, had lost its appeal. We were a disgruntled group of young folk impatiently waiting for two wonderful events to arrive---the Fourth of July, and the day to leave for Mineral King.

Few families ever left the Valley until after the Fourth with its marvelous parade. Tom White, who would later go to his cabin in Mineral King, always led the parade with his string-halt mare. Following him, and interspersed throughout the line of march, were the decorated floats and bands, fraternal orders in uniforms, and many other varied wonders and events. The most important float carried the Goddess of Liberty. The next in importance was the California float. Toward the end of the parade came the noisy, laugh-provoking, though terrifying Callithumpian unit. This was a rowdy group of grotesque characters, dressed in fantastic costumes wearing, for the most part, over-sized, hideous head masks. They sang and

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danced; they laughed and shouted, keeping up a continual rhythm of sound with pans, buckets, kettles, horns, anything that could make noise. Youngsters went wild as it approached and followed with it, screaming and yelling.

Not to be outdone, the screeching calliope with its weird, high-pitched attempt at making musical sounds, came close behind. Thus ended in delightful confusion the long anticipated Fourth of July parade.

The afternoon entertainment began with patriotic speeches in the Court House Park. People loved their country and they took every opportunity they could to express that love. We children felt this patriotic urge deeply.

Then came active, exciting events---the Firemen's Water Fights, and all types of races.

When evening came, friends pooled their fireworks and assembled in groups to gorge upon home-made ice-cream, cold watermelons, and drinks of many kinds. As soon as it was dark, the grand and awesome display of fireworks lit up the evening sky. As it finally ended and the last bit of energy had been spent, big and little patriots alike said weary but happy good-nights, and the big event of the year enfolded itself in sleep.

A day or two followed in preparation for exit to the mountains or to the sea-coast by many families. The Valley

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towns were soon quite deserted by fortunate women and children as they sought comfort from the heat.

Our family was one of the fortunate, for we were going to our holdings in the high country, to dear old Mineral King. We children thought no place on earth could equal it. It lived for us, and we loved it.

Papa packed the buckboard to capacity and usually left a day or so before the rest of us, taking our oldest sister with him. How we envied her, for they would camp overnight at River Bridge, right on the ground, with stars shining brightly overhead. On one trip they had eaten supper not far from their blankets and had thrown chicken bones and other inedibles into the bushes close by. In the night they were awakened by crunching sounds and satisfied articulations. A mountain lion was crouched just a few feet from them thoroughly enjoying the discarded food. Without making a sound, Papa threw his shoe at the beast. Startled, it jumped high into the air and fled into the night.

On the morning of our departure we were awakened early. Our personal dunnage bags of gay calico print had been packed for days, each garment carefully rolled and stuffed into its proper place. The strong drawstrings had been tightly pulled up and fastened. Cleverly tied to each bag, were our clod-hoppers---high-topped shoes of heavy leather with thick hob-nailed soles supposed to last the two months of hard

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mountain wear they would get. They never did!

By seven o'clock we were lined up in our front yard, waiting for the stage due at seven thirty. We girls were primly standing in our dusters, stocking gloves on, and sunbonnets firmly sewed to our hair ribbons to prevent losing them on the long day's trip.

Our brother was more fortunate than we in his patched overalls, free to climb the fence and to run off energy, trying to tease us into action.

A loud clattering of hooves came pounding down the big street. Was it the stage? The low-slung orange one? Was John Perkins the driver? The one who loved horses, and who took his father's famous pure-bred stock all over the United States, showing them at horse shows, state fairs, and races, winning prizes and trophies and money, too?

Four horses whirled into our dead-end street and yes! It was the orange stage, and John Perkins was the driver. It stopped in a cloud of choking dust. We were shouting to Mama, afraid she would be left behind. At last she appeared, locked the front door with a sigh of relief, and came down the walk. The dunnage bags were strapped in and we were lifted into our seats. John Perkins gave a flying leap over the wheel into his front seat, unwound the reins, released the brakes, and with a loud snap of the whip, headed us out of town toward the hills.

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We took Mineral King Road, which went due east to the Four Corners. Beyond there lay the swamps of the Kaweah delta, dark and dank and humid, their stillness broken only by the dismal croaking of many frogs.

These swamps with their tangled growth of tough swamp plants and grasses, with their impenetrable masses of wild grape vines, black berry thickets, willow trees, Valley oaks, were a refuge for birds and wild animals. In them thrived wild boar, bob-cats, bear, deer, mountain lions, wolves, coyotes and strayed cattle that had become wild and vicious, and many smaller and less dangerous animals. No one dared penetrate very far. It was definitely a place to avoid.

The grown-ups talked about a strange woman who lived in the depths of these swamps. When they spoke of her it was in hushed, soft, low tones, as though they were afraid. She had strange powers and could take the wildest animals and birds and do whatever she wished. Not one of them would harm her.

Some people called her a sorceress, and some, a fortune teller. Influential people and business men from the towns round about, would slip away to her camp at night to seek her advice on any plan or problem they might have. Listening breathlessly, we heard them tell of strange rituals performed, accompanied by a strange, weird chant. The woman then interpreted what had been revealed to her. Those who sought her believed implicitly in her powers of prediction and divination. Whatever she

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advised, that they did.

We children thought this all fearfully exciting. The grown-ups, in louder tones we could plainly hear, proclaimed another power the woman possessed---a terrible power that was frighteningly bad. If she wanted to, she could change anybody, especially children, into anything. Even you or me---if she wanted to! As the stage took us through this dreadful place, we huddled closely together, gripped our seats tightly, and spoke only in whispers.

No, we did not like the swamps!

Without warning, the swamp growth ended, and the road burst forth upon the sunny, dusty Hog-Wallows of the plains. Westward, beyond the lowest foothills, these Hog Wallows spread out over the Valley floor in rounded, wave-like humps and hollows. No one seemed to know how they were formed or why they were there. They intrigued and fascinated young and old alike.

Some of the Wallows were almost large enough to be little hills, but most of them were much smaller, lapping and over-lapping eachother in varied heights. They resembled hog wallows in a barn yard, but huge in comparison as though some gargantuan monster had wallowed in the thickening ooze and mud, and those enormous wallows had hardened into clay mixed with rocks and based with layers of hardpan.

In the spring, this Hog-Wallow land was a vast garden of many brilliant and beautiful wild-flowers which lingered long

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after the rainy season. The hardpan formation beneath the Wallows prevented water drainage, so that ponds and mud puddles filled many of them. They provided the plants with moisture until winds and the heat of the sun dried them completely.

The road wound in and out, between and around the undulating surface of the land. How we enjoyed that part of our ride! There were stretches where the road was fairly straight and level. Here the driver snapped his whip over the horses' heads. They quickened their pace and we seemed to fly while we rocked back and forth as the stage swerved from side to side in a rollicking roll, which sent us youngsters into peels of laughter and shouting glee.

Leaving the Hog-Wallows, the road led into Lemon Cove at the base of the lowest foothills. Here we stopped long enough to pick up mail pouches and take on a passenger. Then began the first dragging pull of the day, up over Lime Kiln Hill with its pass that led us down into the lower end of the great Kaweah Canyon. We enjoyed the pleasant ride along its river and the oak covered foothills with steep peaks rising upward.

There were a few citrus groves along the way, but cattle ranches predominated. A turn in the road brought a reddish-brown, cone shaped, nearly perpendicular mountain into view---Blossom Peak rising high, almost in front of us. At its base lay the center of the little settlement of Three Rivers.

We crossed the bridge of the South Fork of the Kaweah

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River. A short distance beyond the center of the settlement, the North Fork emptied its waters into the main flow. It was the confluence of these rivers, the South Fork, the North Fork and the main stream of the Kaweah, all within a short distance of eachother, that gave Three Rivers its name.

The active center of Three Rivers was Britten's Store and Post Office. The Brittens homesteaded a ranch in the early 1890s and built a large country store on it, and stocked it with everything imaginable. This welcome merchandise was hauled in by heavy freight wagons, which took a long, full day to make the trip from Visalia. Noel Britten was storekeeper and postmaster. We children looked forward to seeing him each summer. We considered him the most important person in all the Three Rivers country.

Near Britten's store was a hotel, a blacksmith shop and a place where Giant Forest and Mineral King stages stopped to change horses and often, drivers, and to take on passengers, mail and baggage.

Our stage drew up under the cooling shade of a large sycamore tree near the hotel. We children were lifted from our seats and staggered for a moment when we stood on the ground. We had been sitting a long time. It seemed hard to walk up-hill over a rough and rocky footpath.

Mama removed our dusters and sent us around to the back porch of the dining room, to clean up under the welcome shade of

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Buckboard with the Crowley family at Pogue's Ditch

The Mineral King Stage at Three Rivers

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more beautiful sycamores. A pump was on the low porch, flanked by a long, water-worn bench on which were tin wash basins, tar soap, and a single gourd drinking cup. A framed, bleary-surfaced glass mirror hung on the wall of the porch. A roller towel, already much the worse for use, was beside it. Mama had given us our own towels to use, and had admonished us to use them, but the damp, musky, whiskey-odored, perspiration impregnated roller towel was a challenge and a dare. The pungent smell of it still remains in memory.

We ate our mid-day meal in the dining room. It was served on a long table running almost the length of the room. In the middle of this table was a small circular revolving table on which anything extra for the meal was placed. As it was turned, it fascinated and intrigued us children, but we were afraid to use it. Our brother, who was very fond of butter, once worked up courage enough to give it a turn. He spun it too hard. The dish of butter whirled by so fast he was not able to grab it. The eyes of everyone were upon him. A packer laughed. Our brother was embarrassed and humiliated and so were we! We blushed and hung our heads, losing all desire for anything on the little turn-table.

Everyone sat at the table, on which all foot was placed at once. Most of the diners were unacquainted---a motley group of travelers, stage-drivers, a rancher or two, packers, cowboys. It was a strangely quiet meal except for a request now and then

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to pass the this or that, thank ye Ma-am! Everyone seemed in a hurry to get the meal over and be about his business. It was soon finished, with little other activity than reaching for food, the clicking of cutlery against plates, or the slurping of coffee, often from the saucer instead of the cup. Many men wore long, flowing mustaches. We children got the quiet giggles watching those who drank from saucers. They had a hard time keeping their mustaches from floating in the coffee. When they tried to push them away with their lower teeth, they looked so funny we had to press our own lips tightly together to keep from laughing out loud.

The meal gave little satisfaction to us children. In the confusion of the reaching and grabbing we were too timid to speak up, so we left the table hungry. Mama did her best to help the four of us, but we thought she was quite overwhelmed, herself.

The meal over, we young folk dashed out of the dining room to find Armien Grunigen waiting with the Mineral King stage and a fresh team. We were happy Armien was the driver. He was a friend, and he called us each by name. That we liked.

This stage, however, was not like the comfortable, low slung, colorful one we had ridden in to Three Rivers. This one was higher, much sturdier, and black all over. We were sure it would be road-worthy and strong enough to withstand the steep

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grades that lay ahead. The horses, though not well-matched, looked capable of doing whatever would be necessary. The four stiff seats holding three passengers apiece---four if there were children---had unyielding springs that were bolted to the floor. There would be no jouncing around on them. The road we would travel was rutted, rocky and steep. It would take hardy equipment, strong horses, and an experienced driver to cover the miles ahead without trouble.

Armien helped Mama up to the front seat, where a grown-up boy was already perched. He then swung the four of us up to our hard second seat. He turned to two young women who had transferred from the Giant Forest stage.

A couple of men who were to be passengers also, were standing near. One of them smiled at the women and offered his hand to help them up. They looked delighted when he sat on the seat beside them. An older man was already in the back seat and the remaining one got in beside him. Those were the passengers we were to be with for the long, hard journey. Not too good, we thought, but not too bad. It was a stage full. We hoped the horses could pull us through.

When the passengers were settled and the luggage checked, Armien climbed into his seat, gave a snap to his whip and a flip to the reins. As we drove past Britten's store, people gathered upon the high boarding platform to wave and shout good-bye. Arrival and departure of stages were events of interest to

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everyone. The stage rolled smartly past, raising a cloud of dust as it swung onto the main road. We passengers felt mighty important.

Leaving Three Rivers proper, we rode on through the settlement, where ranches lined both sides of the Kaweah River. Travelers with their own outfits often camped over night on holdings near the road where water was available and hay for their stock could be obtained. The ranchers and their families were hospitable folk and often became life-long friends of Valley people who stopped by, year after year, on their way to the high mountains.

Gradually the road began to rise from the floor of the Kaweah Canyon. Our next stop would be Hammond, a place we looked upon with awe and respect. It was here the Mt. Whitney Power Company built its first power house.

Papa had told us all about it and the famous engineer who had helped to make this wonderful dream come true. The engineer was John Hays Hammond, after whom the small settlement was named. He was a native Californian, born in San Francisco. He attended Yale University where he learned about electricity and mining. Papa said he was an excellent student and had no trouble getting good jobs after graduating. He became one of the world's greatest and most successful mining engineers.

Mr. Hammond's work called him to many parts of the world. He met with strange and exciting adventures. In 1893 he had one

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adventure that almost ended his career. He was in Johannesburg in the Union of South Africa, near which were some of the richest gold mines on earth. There were also diamond, tin and coal deposits in large quantities. The British and white Europeans had control of this valuable part of South Africa. They also wanted to bring under their control the rich agricultural lands and vast cattle ranges in the province of the Boers, who were the farmers of South Africa. The Boers resented the authority of the Europeans, especially the British. Through years of disagreement, their resentment grew to hatred. The Union of South Africa was a distressed and troubled land. Mr. Hammond became involved in the controversy. He was arrested and sentenced to death. The sentence waas changed to fifteen years imprisonment, then again changed to a heavy fine and he was released.

Soon after he returned to America, Mr. Hammond visited his brother, William H. Hammond, who lived in Visalia. His brother, with a group of other Visalians, had been trying for several years to arounse interest in a plan to use water from the Kaweah River to generate electricity. People would have liked the electricity, alright, but the idea seemed too big, too complicated, and too expensive to attempt. They were not willing to back the project with their money. Besides, who in that part of the country knew how to promote such an undertaking?

When John Hays Hammond learned about the plan, he became

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enthusiastic. He had the know-how, the experience, and was confident the project could be financed. He joined the group of men and they formed the Mt. Whitney Power Company.

The first thing needed, of course, was a power plant in the mountains. The company wasted little time in getting the plans under way. By June, 1899, Mt. Whitney Power House No. 1 was in operation. It had been a challenging undertaking---a remarkable accomplishment.

When our stage reached Hammond, Armien stopped in front of the Power House. Everyone was glad to leave the stage and move around a bit. The men were bold enough to step inside the Power House and look at the strange equipment in operation. It was too frighteningly noisy for the rest of us to go near. We children followed Mama and the two women to a shady spot on the opposite side of the road, where we huddled against a fence and hoped nothing would happen to us there. We were certain we could see electricity flashing inside the building and snapping like lightning. We were proud of being able to look upon the large white structure which housed the machinery that worked miracles with the power of water, capturing it, then sending it for many miles over small wires to be put to work. But---we were afraid of it.

It was a great relief to all of us when Arien and the other men came out of the building safe and sound. Armien had news for us. He had learned from the Power House operator that the

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company was starting to dam all the lakes at Mineral King so the flow of water from them could be controlled. Good trails would be built to every lake making it possible for many more people to enjoy the alpine country. It would be a fine thing for Mineral King.

Interesting news, but news that disturbed us young folk. Those beautiful lakes to be damned? It hurt to think of anything as lovely as our high Sierra lakes being marred by man-made dams. We were not pleased at all.

Not far from Hammond, our road turned to the right, following the East Fork canyon of the Kaweah River. We began our climb up Red Hill, a climb we were not anticipating with pleasure. The soil was brickish-red in color, and the loose dirt on top lay deep. We were driving in the heat of the early afternoon sun. The team had to stop often to rest. Each time it did, the stage and its occupants were enveloped in a thick cloud of red dust that made us cough and sneeze.

The red soil fascinated us. We wondered if it would change the color of flowers that grew in it and make them brickish-red.

Someone asked, "Why is the dirt red?"

A tired voice came from the rear seat. "Humph! Anybody with any sense would know why. That blamed sun gets so blistering hot that anything it shines on turns red. Look at me!"

We turned. He was an elderly man, quite portly, dripping

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with perspiration, and his face was a red as a beet. Everyone laughed, but we really felt sorry for him.

The young men were jumper-outers. When the stage slowed down or they saw something that interested them, over the wheels they would go. They made the trip interesting for us, especially when they saw a rattlesnake coiled by the side of the road. They threw rocks at it and we saw it slither across a boulder and down into a little gully.

The portly passenger was friendly. He smiled or winked at us between naps, but most of the time he slept. One of the men said he thought something more than sun was helping make his face red. We didn't know what he meant.

When we reached the summit of Red Hill, Armien gave the horses a sharp fillip with the reins. We began a pleasant descent in partial shade from the oak trees with a hint of a canyon breeze cooling us off a bit. Down, down, down we went to the bottom of the Kaweah Canyon, where River Bridge crossed the East Fork. It was fun, but it seemed a silly thing to do, for we lost all the altitude we had gained climbing up the hot and dusty Red Hill grade.

We stopped at River Bridge where all got out of the stage for a short time; the grown-ups to stretch their legs; the youngsters to run and play and let off steam. We tried to locate a likely spot where Papa and our sister had been sleeping when the lion awakened them. We splashed in the edge of the river

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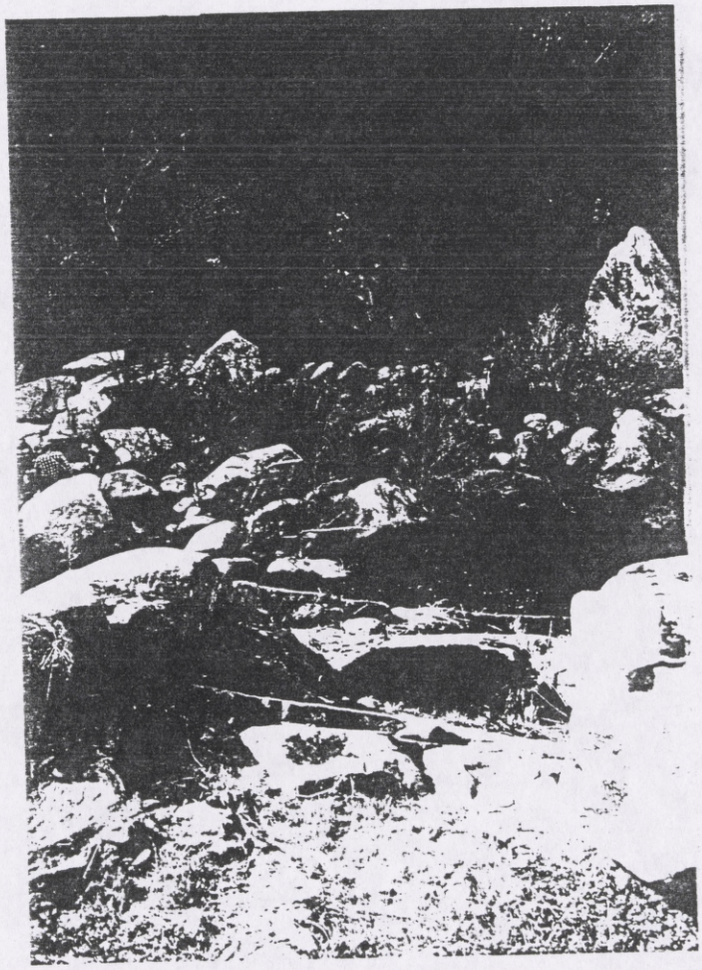
The North Fork of the Kaweah River where River Bridge crossed it.



The Blasted rock which served as a foundation for River Bridge.

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River Bridge Foundation

The cooling stream above River Bridge.

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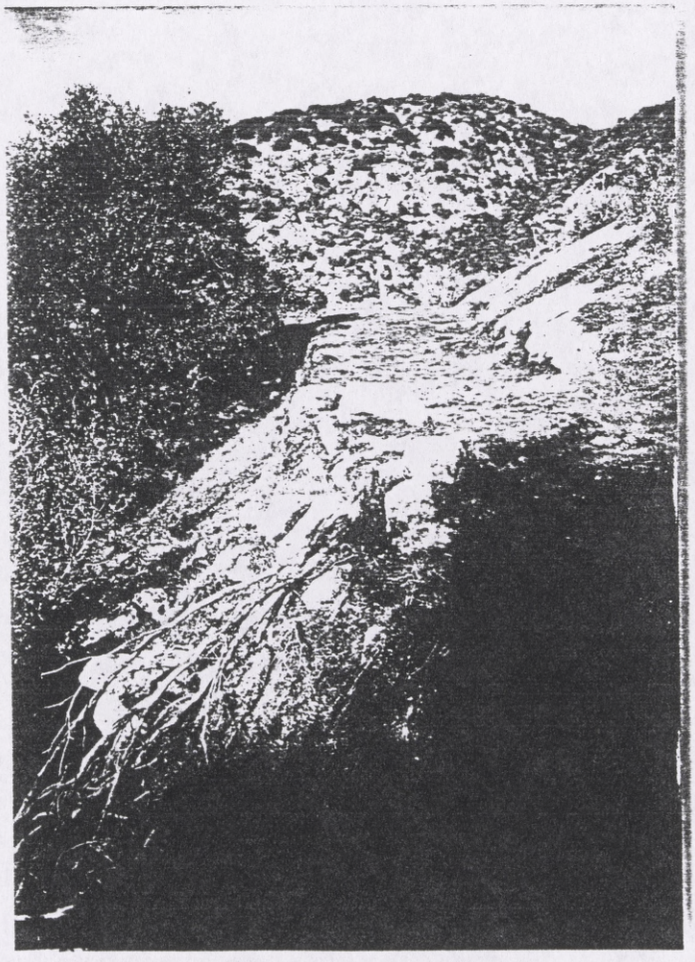
"The road ran along the river for a short distance and was quite level...Then it left the river. Instead of starting the climb gradually, it humped its back immediately and the stiff pull began."



"...Then it left the river."

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where it was shallow, and lay on our tummies cupping our hands as we drank the clear, fresh waters of the Kaweah from its bank.

Then we had a big idea. Could we start on up the road and see how far we could get before the stage caught up with us? Armien thought that was just the thing to do. We were surprised. The road ran along the river for a short distance and was quite level. Then it left the river. Instead of starting the climb gradually, it humped its back immediately and the stiff pull began. It was a rough road. No shade, only dried up shrubs, dead-looking scrub oaks completely covered with endless layers of a light colored dust, and heavy granite boulders making the air hotter as they reflected heat from the sun. There was not even a semblance of a breeze blowing.

The road was very steep. Horses usually balked and refused to go on. We children knew exactly how they felt. We would have balked right then and there, too, but we had to climb on until we found a spot in the road where the grade would level off a bit and it would be safe to stop the stage and climb in. The two young men and the grown-up boy had come with us, and they were as eager to be picked up as we. Armien grinned as he finally stopped for us. With difficulty we climbed up over the wheels and flopped down on our hard seat, exhausted.

Armien released the brakes, slapped the horses with the reins and shouted to them. Real trouble began. Two of the horses would not budge and two were very reluctant. They laid

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back their ears and flattened their backs, but would make no other movement than to try to back up. That frightened us.

Armien had a sort of funny grin on his face, I guess because the horses had gotten the best of him. They knew only too well the stage was heavier now we were all back in.

"Everybody out!" Armein shouted. All of us wearily responded except the two women. They were not about to get out in all the heat and dust. We were disgusted. Even the portly passenger did his best. Armein knew he could not make it, so helped him back into the stage. Mama and the rest of us were already climbing ahead. We must stay in front of the stage for fear the brakes might give way. Were we behing it we would be hit if it rolled downhill with the frightened horses tangled in it.

Cracking his whip again and again, and shouting, Armien got the team to moving and struggling onward until they had passed the worst part of this road that rose almost straight upward. Armien later said this River Hill grade was one of the most famous, infamously bad California roads leading into the Sierras. He was always trying to use big words, but this time we understood him. It was a very bad road, and everybody knew it!

We had climbed until we were wringing wet with perspiration, were hot and thirsty, and completely worn out. Eachone of us children could have cried, but of course, we

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"The road was very steep. Horses usually balked and refused to go on."

"The road had few places wide enough for wagons to pass eachother."

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"It was a rough road. No shade, only dried up shrubs, dead looking scrub oaks and completely covered with dust...

...and heavy granite boulders making the air hotter as they reflected heat from the sun."

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would not. Armien stopped the stage. The steepest part of the climb was over. We could ride again! He was proud of us and said so. That healed our resentment and we were proud and happy. The road reached the summit and soon straightened our. The team began to trot as we approached Cain's Flat. How pleasant the world had become.

We passed Cain's Flat. It had been the end of the first road built toward Mineral King during the early mining days. It was now a way station for travelers, particularly for freighters. There was plenty of room for their large wagons and teams of horses. We hoped before our trip ended we would meet a freight wagon on the road. The lead horses often had yokes of bells attached to their collars. We would hear the sweet jingle far away. It was fun to watch for the wagons. Often we would see the dust cloud they made before we heard the bells. Then as they drew nearer and nearer we became anxious and excited. What if we met on a part of the road too narrow to pass?

A short distance beyond Cain's Flat was Oak Grove, owned and operated by the Griffes---Mr. and Mrs. Griffes and their son Freddie. The intake of the Mt. Whitney Power Company's flume was just below the Griffes' home. This redwood flume carried water from the East Fork of the Kaweah River to a point just above Power House No. I. Here it flowed into a penstock which allowed the water to drop down to the power house in a might fall from which energy would be generated into electricity, and

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the water returned peacefully to its mother stream below. That was too much like magic for us children to understand!

Mr. Griffes was flume walker, checking the flume for breaks, leakages, wash-outs, damage of any kind, and removing injured or drowned animals that had been caught in its swiftly moving waters. It was a dangerous job and a most important one.

Here at the intake of the flume, the Griffes raised practically everything they needed for food. Beautiful and delicious vegetables, fruits, berries. Even white blackberries, which had the flavor and appearance of the black ones, except they were white. Mrs. Griffes served meals to travelers and such meals as they were! She was an excellent and bountiful cook. It was the favorite eating place in these mountains. She was famous for her breakfasts: meat, sausage, bacon, eggs, home-made bread, home-made jams, cream thick enough to cut, home-churned butter, real milk, cake, pie, coffee. It is hard to believe, but that was breakfast. The Griffes were friendly people.After evening meals they took part in the mountain tales and the mountain gossip their guests enjoyed listening to.

Our stage passed this pleasant place and continued on to Grunigen's also called Lake Canyon. It was just across a wide, deep canyon from Oak Grove, a very short distance as the crow flies, but a full hour's drive by road. The shadows were lengthening and that hour's ride in the soft approach of evening with its gentle breeze, cool and refreshing, was a balm allaying

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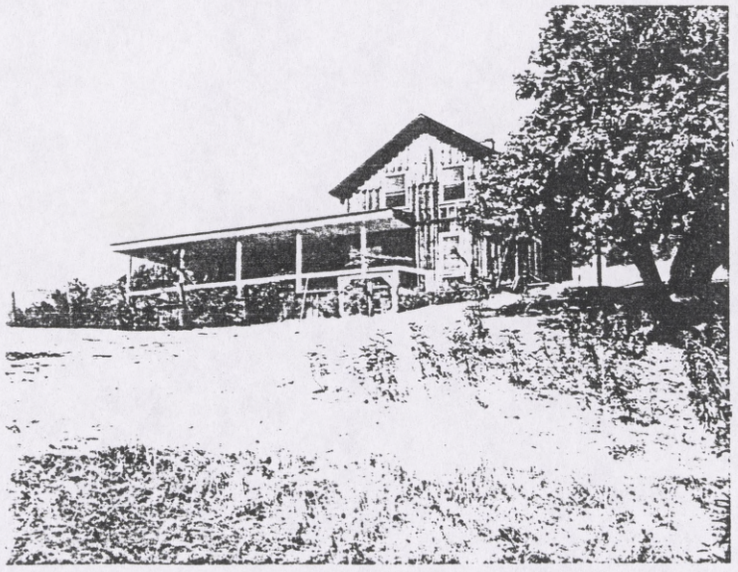
Cain's Flat, the end of the first road built toward Mineral King in the early mining days.



Grunigen's at Lake Canyon, where many of the Mineral King stages stopped overnight.

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all the discomforts of a long, long day.

We would spend the night at Grunigen's. Stiff and tired, we clumsily got out of the stage and climbed a flight of weathered steps. Frieda, a lovely daughter of the Grunigens, was at the top to greet us. She held a large home-made whisk broom in her hand to brush away the dust and grimy dirt of the day's journey. Her smile and the loving pat she always gave us was a charming welcome, and we felt at home as she led us up the narrow stairway to our immaculate rooms. Mama had taken our brother into her room, so we knew he was getting a good working over. We girls looked at our fresh, crisp room with its starched, white curtains fluttering at the windows, and did not want to mess it up. There were three comodes in the room with large white bowls and pitchers full of water on them. We decided to pour but a small amount of water into one use but one wash cloth, being careful not to get it dripping wet; and one towel would be enough. We would wash our hands well, but just wipe off our faces, necks and ears. We were almost finished when Mama came into the room. She saw the situation and everything changed. The bowls were all filled, everything was put to use, even the soap lying in jar tops. The wash rags were all but dripping. The towels were covered with smudge. But we shone! She even slicked our curls back with water. We really felt better but would not admit it. But we did wish our pretty room had not been so mussed up.

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Mama had finished the last curl and had the last hair-ribbon yet to tie when the supper bell sounded.

We were filled with anticipation as we went down the stairs to the dining room, wondering who would be there and what people we would meet. There always were interesting people at the Grunigen's.

Again we all ate together at a long table in the dining room. Many fine objects were in this room, carved and made by Armien's father, John Grunigen, who had been an artisan in Switzerland. To us children, the most unusual thing was a beautiful Swiss clock. And to think, Mr. Grunigen had made it himself!

Mother Grunigen was the cook. Her meals were delicious. We listened to pleasing conversation, and children were not ignored. Our evening with them was always a treasured one, like returning to visit relatives after a long absence.

The best part of the evening was after dinner, when everyone gathered on the porch outside. It overlooked the road and the Salt Creek Pinery nestled high upon the mountain side across the canyon, the first indiction of many forests to come. On the porch, hanging in the cooling breezes, were burlap-covered ollas producing almost ice-cold drinking water.

And Uncle Billy Couzens was there, a dearly loved, white-haired man, quiet in his conversation which was always appealing and of much interest to young folk. He spent the

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early summer at Lake Canyon, but came on up to Mineral King for the rest of the summer when the knoll above his cabin in Mineral King was covered with purple asters. It was our privilege to let him know as soon as the asters bloomed, and he always came.

The soft evening breezes, which had changed their up-canyon daytime course, were now blowing down-canyon, relieving the daytime heat with coolness from Sierran heights. It carried a fragrance with it, pungent, sweet, exotic, which the earth emits as it begins to cool at twilight.

As the evening darkened, the stars came out, brilliantly clear. Conversation then turned to the constellations, planets, stars and Milky Way, which were well defined. There was always someone who could tell us about them. They must have wearied of the endless questions we children asked, but the stories of the heavens fascinated and charmed us.

One year a group of trail-builders from the Forest Service was there proudly pointing out the wide, easy trail they were building on the canyon side across the way. We who loved our mountains could see no beauty in it. We were aghast, for the swathe they were cutting through the chaparral waas like an ugly scar across the beauty of the mountain side leading to the pines.

We were ousted from our beds soon after daybreak next morning. We would reach Mineral King sometime this very afternoon. The most exciting day in our year had arrived.

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The morning was crisp and clear. The sun would not reach our side of the canyon until later. It was cool, and we shivered a bit. Facing the eastern light, the peaks looked black, with rays of sunlight shooting high into the morning sky above them. It was a beautiful day.

We crossed Lake Canyon Stream, which swept a broad sheet of water over slick granite outcroppings, into which holes of varying sizes had been eroded. These had filled with water and were called the "Black Bear's Bathing Holes".

Have you heard about Mary Trauger? She had camped by the side of this stream one night. Early next morning she climbed up to one of the water-filled holes that was hidden from the road. Into it she went, enjoying her cold morning bath, when she heard a great splashing above her. A mother bear and her baby were tumbling and sliding and rolling around in a deep pool, enjoying an early morning bath, too! Never did we ford that stream without stopping our team, hoping to see a bear bathing.

Crossing the stream, the road began to ascend its way to Lookout Point. Part way up we passed Cold Spring where ice-cold water continuously trickled from the mountain side. The road struggled upward over a base of loose decomposed granite over which the horses strained to draw the stage.

When we rounded the bend at Lookout, the morning breezes were still cool, coming down-canyon from the mountain heights

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above. This point is an extension of land reaching out into the East Fork Canyon. The grandeur revealed, filled us with awe. To those familiar with the beauty of the view, or to those reveling in its loveliness for the first time, the response is always the same---a soft intaking of the breath, then silent wonder.

The deep canyon rises eastward with its stream gleaming in a silver streak far, far below us. In the foreground, on either side, thick chaparral clings to its steep slopes. In the distance this growth blends into the rich, dark, green beauty of forested mountain sides that rise up toward high, domed, gray granite-peaked summits. At the far eastern end of this vast canyon, where it terminates in the Great Western Divide, Sawtooth rises to its lofty height. Its ridge and peak are simple, but elegant in design. The shattered, coarse-grained granite of its slopes appear entirely white in the distance, sending forth a soft, exquisite beauty that lightly glows in the sunlight making the mountain with its sawtooth peak seem almost ethereal.

To our left and near at hand is a bold collection of granite rocks and cliffs molded, rounded and polished by glacial action long ago. These cliffs and outcroppings are known as Swallow Rocks, the home of countless swallows darting high into the sky in joyous flight.

Before the swallows came, so we are told, passenger pigeons habited these rocks by the millions. The first adventurers who

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followed this route to Mineral King had fascinating tales to tell how the pigeons rose in such vast hordes they formed enormous feathered clouds that blotted out the sun's rays, and the day became dark as twilight.

Toward the southern end of these mounds of rock, a giant granite arm thrusts skyward. It terminates in a closed fist with the index finger pointing firmly upward. It seems not only to urge, but to command the traveler to follow the canyon onward toward Sawtooth and the circle of great peaks and mountain ridges which enclose the canyons that cradle the headwaters of the East Fork. Within this great and colorful circle lay the dreams and hopes of the early prospectors. Beckoned onward by the insistent, silent summons of that great stone finger, they prodded their horses, mules, and burros over the tortuous trail, certain of the omen it portended---wealth beyond all dreams, or hopes, or expectations.

Leaving Lookout, the narrow road leveled out somewhat. Its more compact decomposed granite base made driving faster and more pleasant. While the stage continued along its way, we were torn between watching the mountain side for anything of interest, or peering over the loose, narrow shoulders of the road, which was little more than a scratch on the canyon's side. This canyon plunged precipitantly downward to the East Fork. It was a thrilling sight, and a fearful one. If the loose granite shoulders of the road should begin to shift, and the outside

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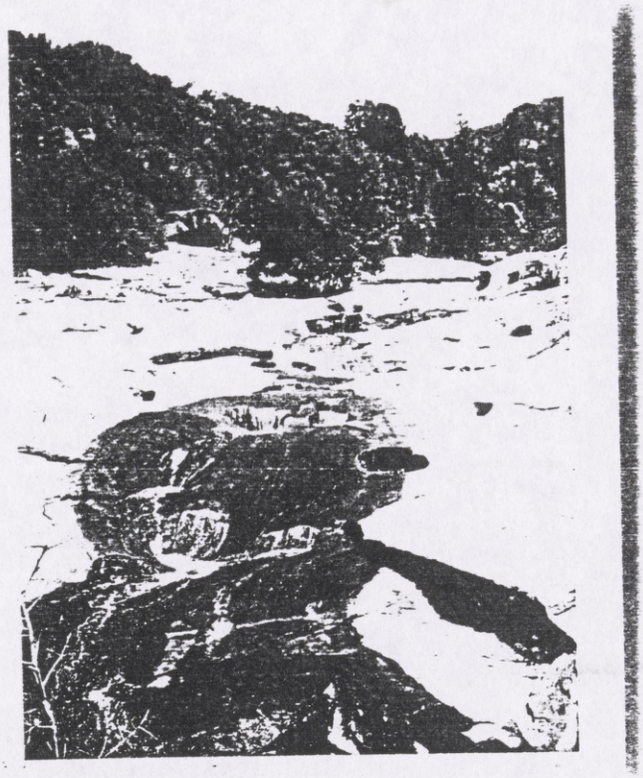
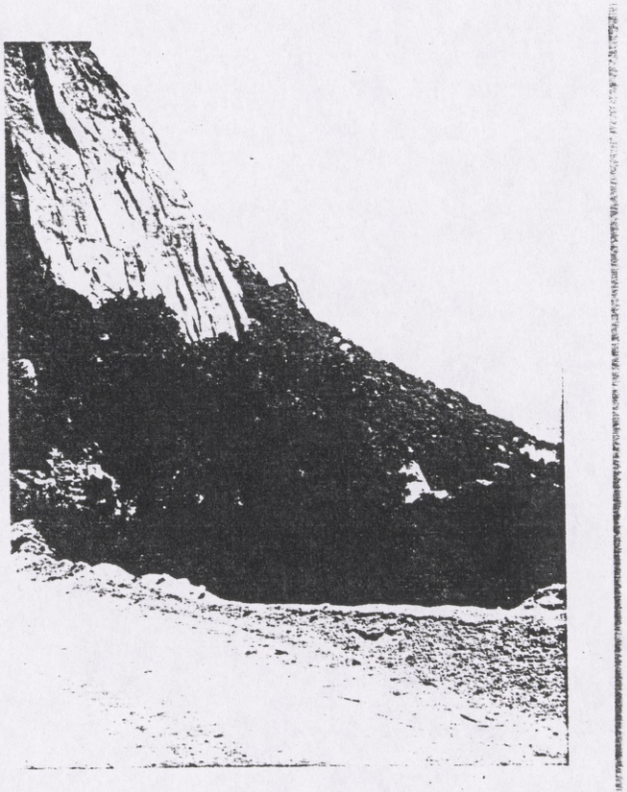


Lake Canyon Stream with the "Black Bear's Bathing Holes".



Swallow Rocks with the giant finger pointing to the mountains.

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wheels of the stage be caught in this shifting, the stage could go over the bank with its horses, driver, passengers and all. We clung desperately to our seats and bent our weight toward the inner side of the road. Doing this we were certain we could avert disaster.

Our fears were not groundless. It was along this part of the road that freight wagons with their loads, buckboards with their packs, and othe rigs had gone over the grade. Often people were injured, but no one had been killed.

The mountain sides here are covered with scrub oaks and thick chaparral. In this conglomerate growth shrubs, trees, and vines cover the slopes with lovely flowers in the spring. Among the loveliest is the buckeye, the beautiful blossoms of which give forth a nectar poisonous to bees and some other insects. It is the first tree to bloom. Soon others follow: the white and blue ceanothus or wild lilac; the matilija poppy with its large, fragile white blossoms; the yellow bush poppy; the thorny yucca cactus with its blossom spikes of white, wax-like flowers reaching eight feet high or more; the yellow fremontia. General Fremont was so impressed by its brilliant yellow-gold blossoms when he first saw it, that he named it for himself. Its foliage sends forth the full fragrance of Sierran forests. "The Old-Man-Of-The-Mountain", the wild cucumber, with the wild pea, tie the plants of the chaparral together, making the hillsides almost impenetrable.

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Before the first approach of winter, birds that live in the high country during summer, and most of the animals there that do not hibernate, migrate to the chaparral, Mama says. There they find protection, water, and food in abundance. The floor of the chaparral is carpeted with seeds of every sort and description, shed there by the varied plant growth. Insects deposit their eggs on branches and bark, where they eventually become cocoons, chrysalids, grubs, worms---perfect food for the migrating birds and animals which thrive on such a diet.

Snow comes later to the chapparal, and in much smaller amounts than on the alpine heights. Most of it does not penetrate the thick plant growth. It remains on top to freeze and make a foundation for more snow that is to follow. What little that sifts through the tangle of chaparral soon melts from the warmth given off by the living plants. Sometimes the snow covering lasts quite a while. Again it quickly melts. It makes little difference to the wild life living in its shelter.

What a wonderful winter home these wild creatures have! Refuge from the storms; food in abundance; runways for action; protected burrows and dens; security from many enemies; water from melting snows; openings to escape to the outdoors when desired. What more could winter provide?

The stage dragged along in the heat of the July sun. Flies and insects buzzed about us, attracted to our wet, perspiring faces. Horse flies and insects attacked the team. Armien lifted

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them from the horses' backs with an expert flip of the whip.

A buzzard or two always seemed to be circling overhead. Or were they eagles? We could not exactly tell.

"Buzzards!" Armien called back to us. "Nothing but old turkey buzzards searching for carion in the chaparral."

Mama told us there was much more life in the chaparral during the cold months of winter than during the dry heat of summer. We believed her! After driving through it for those many miles all we ever laid our eyes on were the swallows, the insects, the buzzards, the insects, the slithering rattlesnake, the insects, the insects, the insects! Armien said if we drove through at night we would see many more things---foxes, owls, rodents of many kinds, coyotes, bats and the like. And, wonderful thought, there would be no insects.

The thick, oppressive odors of the chaparral, punctuated by an ever-present dust cloud kicked up by the horses' feet, became increasingly unpleasant. Everyone became listless and sleepy. The action of the harness on the team did arouse a little interest in us children. We would shut our eyes and then tell exactly what the road was like by the different sounds the harness made. It jangled loudly as the team jogged along on fairly level stretches. On rises of any kind it swished over the backs and rumps of the climbing horses, whipping their sweat into a lather which sent forth an unpleasant odor. How it creaked, accompanied by screeching brakes, when the stage headed

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downhill!

All became quiet in the stage. Some slept; others dozed. Nearing a hot, dry draw a Katydid shrilled its penetrating call. We children answered it softly, "Katy did, Katy did, Katy did- - - " then, suddenly, at the top of our lungs, "WHAT?"

That "What?" resounded like a rifle shot in the quiet afternoon. The lead horses skittered all over the road. The wheelers scrounged down in the traces. Armien, who was slouching over the reins, shot bolt upright in his seat. The two women screamed. The young man, asleep in the back seat, awakened with a start and let out an angry oath. The portly passenger, in an utter daze, kept muttering over and over again, "What in blazes! What in blue blazes!"

We had set off an explosion, we are here to tell you, and were four badly frightened youngsters.

Armien stopped the stage. Mama exchanged seats with our brother. She had not said a word---not a single, solitary word. That looked bad for us. She must have been worn out, too. It had not been an easy task corralling four lively youngsters on a crowded stage, trying to keep them from annoying the passengers, and still not being too strict with them. We had promised to be good, and thought we had been, but a grown-up's idea of what is being good, and a youngster's idea do not seem to be very much alike.

The passengers were really annoyed and continued ranting

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about the terrible thing we had done. Finally they all quieted down. Mama then, began telling us stories. We loved to listen to her sweet, clear voice and delighted in each tale she told.

"Have you noticed the clumps of redbud? Their brilliant magenta-pink, pea like blossoms bloomed in early spring. They matured into pale green, bean like pods that should be purple by now. The thin, pretty heart-shaped leaves hanging from the branches like loosely attached pendants, turning and fluttering in the breeze. They changed to yellow weeks ago, then dried into a softly tinted hue. A this stage we call the redbud bushes the "Music Trees". Whenever a gentle breeze sets the dried leaves and pods in motion, music is heard---exquisite harmony with tones unbelievably sweet and clear.

"If one will stop to listen, the music comes forth light and airy, and so true in tone and tempo it seems it must be directed by a great and masterful musician. One feels blest each time he hears it, and can only rejoice with gratitude for the loveliness God has bestowed upon our earth."

"Mama, do you think I'll ever hear it?" our youngest sister asked.

"I am sure you will. I shall ask Armien to stop if we see a clump, but they grow in the foothills and lower chapparal, so I think we have passed them by now."

Our brother, sitting side-ways in the front seat, noticed snow nestled on some of the highest peaks.

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"Wouldn't it be fun to be safely camped in some mine tunnel when the winter's first storm blows into the high country?" Mama asked. "You know Mr. Clough often is."

"Really, Mama?"

So thus another story began.

"You know how busy the chipmunks and gray mantle squirrels become around our cabin as autumn approaches, gathering and storing food for the winter. But did you know that at about the same time in the fall, as if by signal, they all disappear? Then it is that the Clark's Crows come down from the highest peaks for a day or so, but soon depar in flight.

"When this happens, Bill Clough becomes retless and scans the sky often. These are signs to him that the encircling peaks and heights have prepared themselves for winter. He must gather together his winter gear and get settled at Empire Mine, where he will finish his assessment work for the year.

"Think of what it is like with winter fast approaching the peaks and ridges of the Great Western Divide and the Sawtooth Circle. Fog clouds rolling in from the west, choking the great East Fork Canyon. Over Timber Gap massive cloud formations being hurled by angry winds just above the highest peaks. A storm is on its way. A big storm!

"Many of the larger animals are on the move. They have lingered almost too long before heeding the signs for migrating. The high country is being hastily abandoned except for the

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animals that will sleep the winter away in almost lifeless hibernation.

"There is one group that braves this country and revels in its wintry blasts---the little McGinnis rabbits. That is Bill Clough's name for the little animals, but I am sure he means the pikas, or coneys as some people call them. They enjoy no place better than the alpine country in summer, and its wild, exciting storms in winter. They are so tiny it does not seem possible they can survive in such surroundings.

"They are just a little round ball of tailess fluff, not longer than eight inches, at the most. One weighing six ounces ia a heavy-weight. They resemble guinea pigs more than anything I know, but they also remind me of rabbits, which they are.

"Being so soft and fragile appearing, it is hard to believe they can exist in their way of life. They choose the highest and rockiest mountain sides they can find, broken up rock slides if possible. They make their homes deep under these rocks, protected by runways so narrow that even the weasel and its cousin, the marten, slender as they are, find it difficult to reach the pika's dens.

"These tiny animals work hard all summer cutting plant life with their sharp teeth, and carrying it in their mouths to crevasses and holes in rocks near their shelters. Here they pile it into miniature stacks where the plants dry and provide them with food for winter. Two things will make you realize you are

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in pika country, though you may never see one---these little dried stacks sticking our of the rocks, and the inquisitive whistle of the pika which is usually one high-pitched whistling note.

"Mr. Clough says his McGinnis Rabbits are tawny gray in summer, but in winter their fur turns white to protect them from their enemies when they go foraging for their food deep down in the snow.

"Bill Clough loves these little creatures. They are his only companions for weeks. He tells strange things about them. After their fur turns white, they are able to talk with him. Bill says at night they come out of their cracks and crannies,curl up by his warm fire and talk about many wonderful things. But, strange to say, when spring comes and the color returns to their fur, Bill tells us they can no longer speak. When he goes near them, they dart into rocks and are afraid of him. This makes Mr. Clough very sad."

"Mama,", asked one little sister, "Don't you think it is like playing with dolls? Mr. Clough talks to the little pikas, and then talks back for them?"

"Perhaps so, but Mr. Clough believes these lovely little creatures do talk to him, and that makes him very happy.

"At last the storm clouds hit hard, lashing everything before them and blanketing the peaks and slopes and meadow lands with a deep, deep covering of snow.

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"Alpine plants have long been dormant. Seeds have ripened and buried themselves in meadows and rock crevases. Most of the animals are in winter sleep. All is wrapped in a strange silence broken only by the wind in its tempermental surgings.

"More storms will come and the snow will get deeper and deeper. Tucked in by these huge snow blankets the high country cuddles under them and like the little hibernators, these great peaks and mighty slopes also sleep the winter away. They will waken in the early summer to again give forth all the magic beauty and esquisite grandeur they possess."

"Thank you, Mama. I liked that story. How about a bear story now?" our brother asked.

"Yes---yes! Tell us a bear story!" we girls shouted.

"Please don't make it too scarey," little sister added.

"Alright," Mama laughed. "But bear yarns almost have to be scarey! This one is about the last grizzly ever seen in Mineral King.

"You know, when Harry Parole discovered Mineral King there were many animals there. Some have disappeared. There were many mountain sheep. They are gone. There were timber wolves. They are almost gone. There were wolverines. They are gone. There were grizzly bear, and they are gone.

"At the time of this story, the Empire mining boom was well under way. The dynamiting on the claims had frightened away all the grizzlies except one. This old fellow had found Timber Gap

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a good place to live. The dynamite blasts bothered him, but the garbage left from Tom Fowler's Empire Hotel was not far away. It allayed his fear of the noise. He could not resist the temptation of good food and plenty of it.

"Ras Warner worked at the Empire Mine. He tired of the beef and mutton diet the hotel provided, so decided to quit work one day and go over Timber Gap into deer country, hoping to bring back venison.

"He was riding along peaceful like, with one leg over the horn of his saddle, singing at the top of his voice. His horse suddenly reared, throwing Ras right in front of that old grizzly standing seven feet high.

"What could Ras do? The horse had bolted with his rifle. He couldn't shoot. He couldn't run. He couldn't duck. There he was, right smack-dab in front of the old fellow, so close he could have touched him. Yes, what could Ras do? Well,he did it! He closed his eyes so tight he almost didn't ever get them opened again. Grabbing his hat off his head with one hand and his bandana from his neck with the other, he began waving them with all his might and main, jumping as high as his legs would go, yelling and bellowing like a mad bull.

"That grizzly actually turned pale, and was so scared he couldn't get his front legs down to the ground. When he did, he made a bee line in the opposite direction, not stopping for trees or boulders or anything in his way. He tore the earth

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apart as he went, scooping out a deep canyon into which boulders big as cabins rolled and rumbled. That old grizzly completely disappeared. Neither hide nor hair was ever seen of him again in our mountains."

At this point the story telling came to an abrupt end. We had noted a change in the horses. They lifted their weary heads, pricked up their ears, and were speeding to an uphill jog. We knew the sign. Water ahead! It was not long until we went over a rise and down into Trauger's with its weathered watering trough. Water was piped to it from a small stream bouncing from rock to rock as it tumbled down a rough and narrow canyon.

The hillsides were dry. Yellow hay was scattered about with here and there small piles of smoke-blackened rocks, remains of cooking camp-fires. The road widened enough here for a freight wagon or two to camp overnight. It was not an attractive spot, but it gave us a welcome change with its refreshing water and an indication we were leaving the chaparral.

We all got out of the stage. Armien gave the horses a long drink. Mama called us to the water pipe. We each drank our fill, then saturated rags with water and squeezed them against our faces. Mama did not seem to care how wet we got. We were still apprehensive of her. Each moment we expected she would get us into a huddle and scold us soundly for the Katy-did performance. But she did not, and never has. We still wonder why.

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While we were soaking our faces we took turns holding our wrists under the running water. We wet our ear lobes, too. The evaporation of the water on them had a very cooling effect. We only wished they were a foot long.

The next water trough was at Slap Jack Canyon, named for Slap Jack Smith, who owned a ranch in the Three Rivers country. Scattered pines were in evidence---scrubby, dust covered ones. The country was changing, promising us comfort and forested beauty ahead. The team took quick drinks here, but no one left the stage.

We could scarcely wait to reach Redwood Canyon, the first of many special places we had dreamed of for months. This canyon is a spot that needs to be seen and felt. It is a flourish of contrasts in which nature delights.

Giant twin redwoods, Sequoia Giganteas, stand tall, straight and beautiful beside the road. In dignified strength and determination they seem to be guarding the entrance to the remarkable forests ahead. These forests are very special being generously dotted with many Giant Sequoias on both sides of this forested part of the East Fork Canyon.

We children were out of the stage almost before it stopped, scampering to the canyon side of the road where a culvert under the road deposited water, creating a miniature marsh through which flowed a tiny stream. Were they there again this year?

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Yes, there were the skinned lizards in their repulsive nakedness. So their soft, pinkish, scaleless skin appeared to us. We could not stand to look at them, but the fascination of these little newts was so intense that we could not keep our eyes away from them.

Nature had played a trick on us, no doubt. In compensation for this teasing she had filled the small marsh with moss, ferns, and graceful grasses interspersed with monkey flowers, water daisies and many small blooming plants we did not know. Small willows lent them shade. Above this lovely spot floated and turned in graceful rhythm the exquisite azure blue gossamer winged butterflies. Mama says blue is rarely found in North American butterflies. Some varieties have spots and markings of blue, but pure blue predominating is found only in the small gossamer winged group.

Satisfied to have found the intriguing but obnoxious newts there, and the fairy-like butterflies floating in their loveliness above the little marsh, we hastened across the road to follow a damp trail leading up Redwood Canyon. A clear boulder stream ran beside it, almost hidden by the branches of overhanging trees and bushes. We had to bend low to miss them, and shivered in the unexpected coolness. Lush ferns, slippery moss, water daisies, yellow mimulus, and an occasional tiger-lily spattered by the splash of tiny water falls, completed the loveliness of this canyon.

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A whistle sounded loud and clear. Time to move on. There was just one more thing we had to do. Racing up the road to the giant redwoods we embraced them as far as our arms would reach, and welcomed them to our hearts again---those trees that had lived, right in that very spot for so many, many hundreds of years.

From now on the journey would be a joyous one, greeting treasured beauties along the way. There would be no more stops except to give the team breathers, to deliver mail or packages, to dispose of fellow travelers.

The team seemed as happy as we when they entered the cooling shade. The harness kept up a continuous jangle as the road led deeper and deeper into the forest. At Timber Point the trees thinned out a bit. Through them a closer and more magnificent view of Sawtooth and portions of the wild, rough Monarch Canyon tempted Armien to stop a few moments. The road turned northward here. A fragrant breeze reached us. We breathed long and deeply.

"Ah, the scent of the pines!" the women exclaimed.

The scent of the pines was there, but the rich forest fragrance we enjoyed was not from the pines. It came from the bear-brush with its small, rose-like blossoms covering the forest floor. The scent is similar to that of the pine, but intensified. It is pleasing if one is but passing by, but becomes over-powering if tramped upon for any distance. It

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permeates clothing, boots, anything whith which it comes in contact.

As we circled into Atwell's Mill we could hear the noise from the little donkey engine, and see its black smoke rising. The mill was in operation, but we were told the Giant Sequoias were no longer being cut. We could see the huge stumps of those that had been felled. In the canyon at Atwell's Mill an exceptionally large and beautiful grove of the Redwoods had stood, many of the trees very, very old. To atone for their destruction, it seems, every tiny seed in the small cones of those fallen monarchs must have rooted in a determination to bring to the earth again such a grove. Think of the thousands of years or more that must pass to replace them in all their glory!

We felt very sad as we rode through the saw-mill country.

As the forest rose in elevation we noticed how thick and productive the undergrowth had become. The manzanita bushes were very large and thrifty with their shiny dark red bark. The limbs were covered with small, elegant, wax-like flowers, softly pink in color. In autumn they would become the tiny apples their name implies---an especial delicacy for the black bear; a potent liquor for the Indian;a jelly for the gourmet, wild and provocative in flavor.

The Sierra wild cherry was very lush and in its prime. The brilliant red fruit had almost matured and was truly tempting. Leaning over the front seat we youngsters, in whispers, begged

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Armien to stop and let us pick some. We thought the two women passengers should have a taste of them. Mama gave us a warning shake of her head and an emphatic "No!" So, Armien slapped the reins and trotted past instead.

For the moment we had forgotten the Katydid. To have added bitter wild cherries would have been an insult beyond repair. There is nothing more bitter in all the world, we children thought, than a bright, red Sierra Cherry not quite ripe, and how we did want those women to taste them!

The forests began to thin on our side of the canyon, and great bouler-studded mountain sides appeared in their stead. We began the last difficult climb of the road to High Point, which was actually the highest point on the road. The road builders had to make this ascent to find a place suitable for building a high bridge across the wet and rocky canyon. The stream that spread its waters across the canyon became known as High Bridge Creek.

After having crossed it, the road descended sharply down Graveyard Hill. During the mining days a now-slide had claimed a man's life there. Back a short distance from the road was a crude wooden cross nailed to a fir tree.

We had again descended almost to the level of the East Fork Canyon. It was closing in to a bench-like obstruction over which the river would have to flow on its way down canyon. In doing so it created a fall which split into three distinct

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cataracts forming the "Three-Falls-Below-the-Gate". As we drew opposite them we children could scarcely contain ourselves, for we now began the climb over the bench that formed one boundary of the Mineral King country.

The road turned eastward here with the canyon, which rose very gradually for some distance. That made it possible for the East Fork to widen its channel, smooth out its banks, and offer pleasing camp and cabin sites under a forest of fir and pine trees. The stream was lined with willow, alders and quaking aspen. In its depths rainbow trout thrived. This area was called "Barton's Camp", or "Below-the-Gate", a beautiful and inviting entrance to the Mineral King valley.

The portly passenger was to leave us here. With the help of the grown up boy, he took his baggage across a fallen fir tree which served as a foot bridge over the East Fork. Here his family had set up a fine camp for the summer, close to a spring so cold a watermelon could be iced in its depths.

The grown-up boy opened "The Gate". It was a tall, delapidated "Z" type---very likely the original one built by Harry Parole when he fenced the small opening at the end of the canyon so domestic animals could not stray down the road. The stage drove through, then waited for "The Gate" to be closed and fastened.

Just one more mile to go! In spite of our stiff, hard seat it seemed to actually bounce from our excitement as the team

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trotted up the road. Timber Gap, Empire Mountain, Sawtooth, Monarch Canyon, Potato Row Hill were all before us, and had not changed a bit.

A shallow graveled sheet of water, the overflow from a cold, clear spring up the mountain side, covered the road for a distance, and the horses seemed to deliberately splash their feet in it. There stood the big, porous Lime Rock, generally known as Coral Rock, because of its resemblance to coral. Some called it the Soda Rock, or more likely, "Sody" Rock, surrounded by tall yellow cone-flowers, high golden-rod, red columbine, and small composites. It was all beautiful, lovelier than we had remembered.

Climbing again, we went over Coral Rock grade. There, below us, was Grasshopper Flat completely covered with bracken fern, still green and fresh. When it dried and became a refuge for countless grasshoppers, Papa would make grasshopper swatters out of folded newspapers, punch holes in the lids of tobacco cans, and send us children to fill those cans with grasshoppers for fish bait. We did not see how he could stand to put themalive on the fish hooks. They always spit tobacco juice then, and that is awful!

We turned south and crossed Monarch Creek at "Sunny Slope". The miners called it "Dog Town" because the largest butcher shop of mining days was located there, and it became a favorite hang-out for all the dogs in camp.

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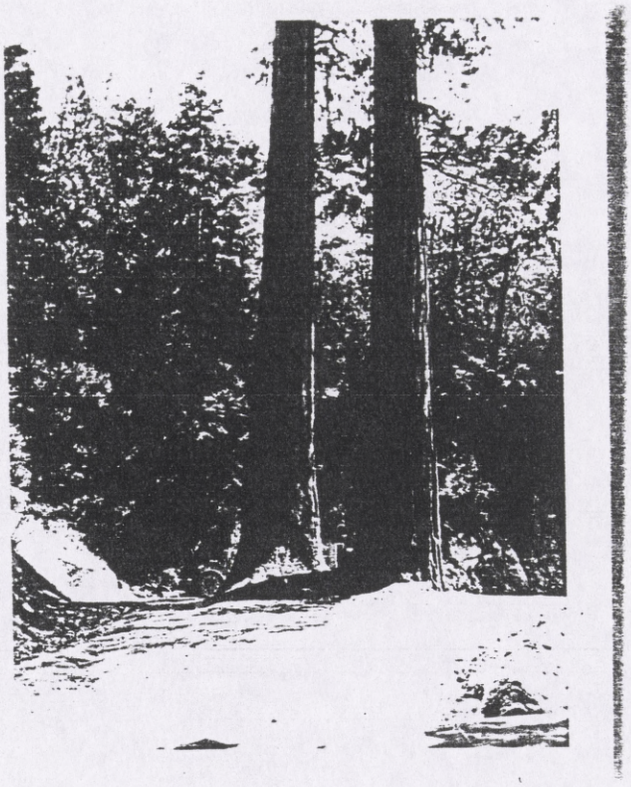
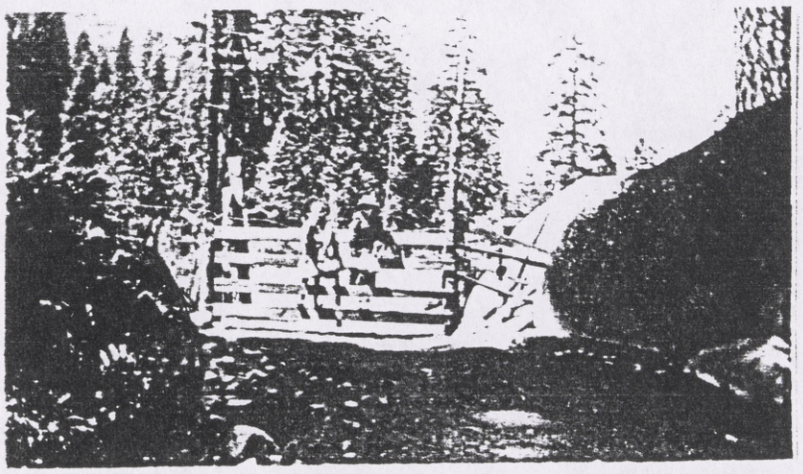


The two Giant Sequoias at Redwood Canyon.



The Gate, constructed at the head of the North Fork Canyon above Barton's Camp to contain domestic stock in the Mineral King Valley.

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The view changed completely. Before us stretched the long, narrow Mineral King Valley. The miners referred to it as "The Flats". Also the meadows high up on the mountain sides were called flats---Groundhog Flats, Monarch Flats, White Chief Flats, Eagle Flats. Once Mineral King had been reached, the area with cabins between Monarch Creek and the small resort, including it, was spoken of as "Camp". The children in Camp were very critical of outsiders and judged them by such standards as the proper use of Mineral King names and expressions. They, like the old timers, were jealous of this country they loved, and did not welcome changes of any kind.

Going south now, we faced Farewell Gap, formed by Little Florence Peak on our left, and Vandever Mountain to the right. Bearskin spread out on its western slope---an icefield that seldom completely melted. The White Chief country revealed its ridge above the red-fir covered slopes of lesser heights. Eagle Peak could just be seen. To the east Potato Row Hill with its serrated ridges, joined the colorful, rugged slopes of the Great Western Divide. We were entirely surrounded by fascinating, colorful scenery on every side.

The journey was fast approaching its end. The East Fork would now lose its identity, and be referred to as the river or the stream. We forded it just below Papa's barn. The team scrambled with great difficulty to draw the stage over the rough and rocky bank, one of the worst spots of the entire road.

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With a long, drawled out "Whoa!", Armien brought the stage to a stop in front of "Smith House", to be our home for the next two months. We were out of the stage in a flash and running around in wild confusion.

Papa and our oldest sister were there to greet us. Had they seen a lion at River Bridge this trip? Was the Big Rock big as ever? Had the snow damaged any cabins? Were any old friends in camp? Had anyone dug out the mineral springs yet? Could we have some gum from the store? We were dashing about getting into everybody's way, and receiving not a single answer.

Mama finally called us to a halt. The two women passengers were leaving with friends they would visit. The young men were in the store making arrangements for a hiking trip over Black Rock Pass into the back country of the Kern. The grown-up boy had unharnassed the horses and was taking them to the stream for a drink and then on to their stalls in the barn for a feeding and a rest. Armien had disappeared.

Get your ticks and make up your bunks," Mama called. That was the only thing required of us after our long trip. Each one of us went running with a new tick to the barn to fill it with fresh, clean straw. Then, carrying them piggy-back, we took them up to our bunks. Those bunks were harder than rocks! We dreaded the first few nights in them. Across the frames we placed half inch thick slats from head to foot. On the slats we laid our ticks through which tiny stems of straw protruded. A

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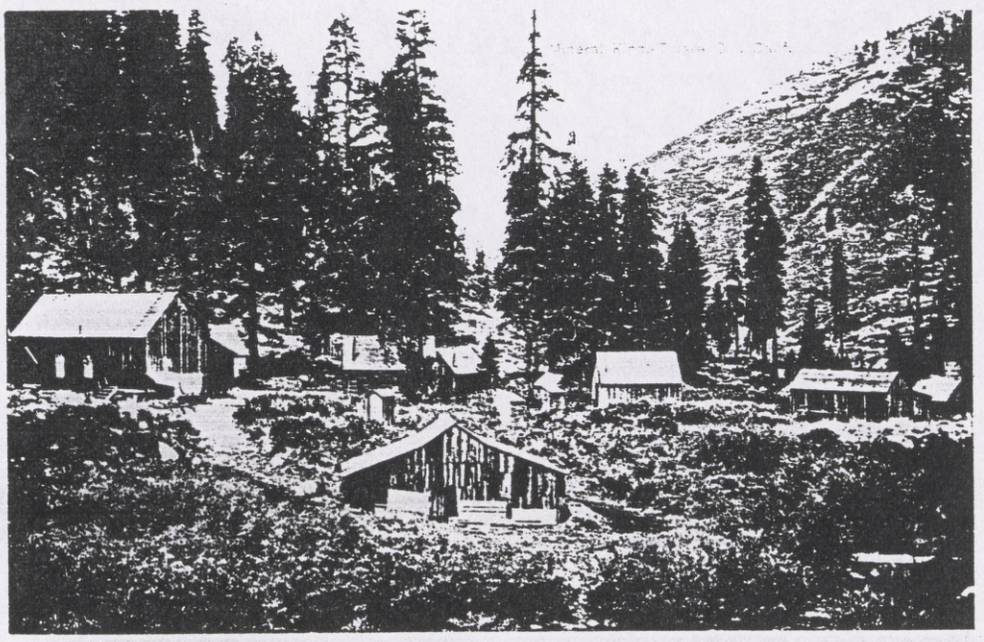
Black Wolf Falls on Monarch Creek. The road crossed below the falls.



"The Flats", with Mineral King Camp.

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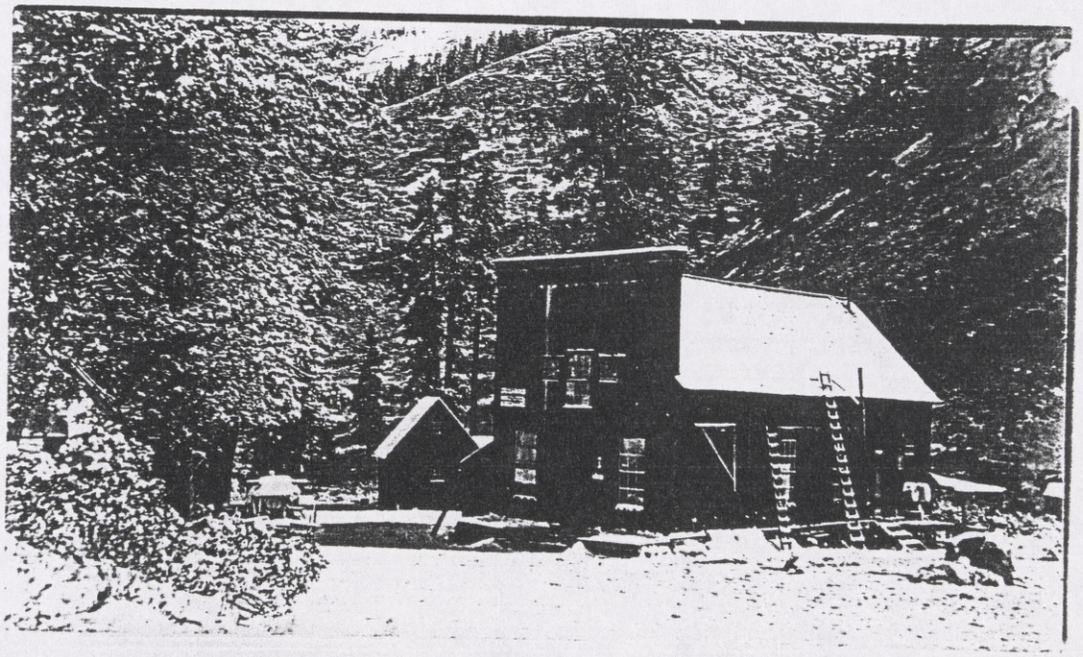
Big Rock, a favorite meeting place of the young people in camp.



Smith House Hotel---the end of the journey.

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thick, quilted, cotton-filled comforter was folded and placed for protection over the scratchy ticks. It also added the only bit of softness to an otherwise completely hard bed. Two unbleached muslin sheets were tucked in over the comforter. For warmth a couple of heavy woolen blankets and a home-made woolen crazy-quilt completed the make up of our bunk beds, as well as the make up of all the other bunks in Smith House. A large feather pillow enveloped in a gay calico pillow case added the final touch.

The bunks looked inviting as we plumped the pillows into place, but we knew how miserably hard they were. But, after all, what difference did it make? We were in Mineral King with two months of wonderful adventure awaiting us. Nothing else mattered!

Reluctantly, almost unconsciously, each one of us yielded to the inviting appearance of the bunks. It was only a moment until we were fast asleep, captured by the nap we so badly needed, but which Mama would not have dared suggest.

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